

The Dwarfing of Trees, Developed Here as a Hobby, Said Building New Business

Dwarfs transformed Gilbert S. Cruz into a tree breeder, author, publisher and scientist.

The Morada Lane resident built a new business and captured the interest of experts because he is so taken by tiny trees. When ill health forced him to take a leave of absence last year from his long-time career as a calculator salesman, Cruz turned to a hobby of stunting trees.

In the last 12 months, this hobby has developed into an enterprise called "Don Pedro Farms" where Cruz is pioneering in the commercial production of dwarf Christmas trees and experimenting in the wholesale dwarfing of other types. The Division of Forestry is watching closely his experiments with varieties cut for Christmas trees.

Cruz's idea is to grow Christmas trees no taller than three feet which can be kept in pots and moved indoors during the Yule season. There will be no messy needles and no dead tree to lug out when the holidays end, he says. His first Yule dwarfs will be ready in from three to five years.

DWARFS REDWOODS

While other tree lovers fuss over Sequoia Gigantea, hoping to raise giant specimens of one of the largest known trees, Cruz concentrates on dwarfing the redwood. He babies his sequoia, the gift of a farm adviser, with a dream of growing a "giant" redwood only a few inches tall.

His farm also serves as a hobby center where he packs kits to start others growing dwarf trees for pleasure and profit.

Cruz decided to strip the mystery from the hobby, "Bonsai," or trees-in-a-dish, which is a Japanese creation. Oriental growers painstakingly stunted trees so they could have live displays in a minimum of space. Their methods of pruning roots to cause dwarfs became known after World War I, but were not widespread.

Many years ago Cruz visited a Northern California tree experimental



DWARF TREE SPECIALIST

Gilbert S. Cruz, Morada Lane, developed his hobby of growing Dwarf Trees into a miniature industry and today packs dwarf tree kits to start others cultivating tiny trees. He is pictured above with an 11-year-old Juniper tree, one of his home-grown dwarfs.

farm to demonstrate calculating machines.

This visit whetted his interest in tree cultivation. Later he read as much as he could about the dwarfing of trees and grew some. He increased his study last year and several months ago wrote and published a booklet detailing the process of dwarfing trees.

SELLS HOBBY KITS

In addition, he began to pack hobby kits, containing seeds, fertilizer, other cultivating aids and instructions.

Cruz sees no tricks to his new trade. The raising of dwarf trees is the same as for normal trees the first year. The following winter or spring they are transplanted and the main tap root cut. Tap root pruning continues for five years until the tree "automatical-

ly gives up." Top pruning also is done to shape the tiny growths. To train trees, Cruz uses copper wiring, sticks and stones to force the growth in various directions.

The pinching and pushing results in mature trees only a few inches in height. At his farm, Cruz is dwarfing all types of trees, including fruit and flowering types.

Thousands of trees are being rooted in his planting beds. His successes include a tiny forest in a flat bowl with six different types of trees all small enough for a table arrangement.

Happy with his hobby which grew into a dwarf industry, Cruz believes in spreading his wealth. "Anyone can grow dwarf trees, for pleasure and profit."

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